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### JEFFERSON DAVIS.

**Character Sketch Prepared and Read at Historical Meeting of the Daniel Tedder Chapter U. D. C., Nov. 25, 1909.**

#### Character Sketch of Jefferson Davis.

His life was gentle, and the elements so mixed in him, That Nature might stand up and say to all the world, "This was a man."

Jefferson Davis was born in Fairview, Ky. His father moved later to Woodville, Miss., hence she shares the honors of this noble man. He entered Transylvania University at Lexington in 1820. He was considered the brightest and most intelligent boy in school, and by his classmates the handsomest and most courageous lad among them.

At college he was much the same as he was in after life; always gay and brimful of buoyant spirits, but without the smallest tendency towards vice or immorality. He had that innate refinement and gentleness that characterized him through life. He was always a gentleman in the highest sense of the word. From the high moral tone and unswerving devotion of conscience which characterized his whole career.

In 1824 when he was sixteen he was appointed to a cadetship to West Point by President Monroe. He graduated in 1828 and was assigned to duty as second lieutenant in the United States Cavalry Command at Fort Crawford, then in Michigan Territory now in the State of Wisconsin. He was second lieutenant during Black Hawk war, and was instrumental in causing their surrender.

In 1833 he was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant in the First Regiment of Dragoons, and was active in all Indian troubles, going out on the western plains where they were most hostile.

In 1835 he resigned his commission in the army to engage in cotton planting, and about this same time he married Miss Sarah Knox Taylor, daughter of Col. Zachary Taylor. She died a few months after their marriage, and he lived in seclusion and retirement for several years after her

death, reading a great deal.

The retirement of this young officer to the shades of private life seemed to his friends at the time the throwing away of a splendid opportunity, if not cutting short a brilliant career, but his quiet years of study were really the best school in which to make careful preparation for the grand life before him.

In 1845 he married Miss Varina Howell, daughter of Wm. B. Howell in the course of this same year, having been defeated in one election, he took his seat in the House of Representatives from Mississippi. When the Mexican war came he resigned his seat in Congress to join his regiment who had already begun preparations for war.

At the close of the war he was appointed brigadier general by President Polk, but he declined, owing to his belief that the President had no power to make such appointments.

He was elected Secretary of War in 1853 under President Pierce, and when the war broke out in the early 60's he was at the front in his efforts to bring about peace.

It has long been the custom of Northern writers to talk disparagingly about the "secession conspiracy" and to denounce Southern leaders and especially Mr. Davis as secretly plotting to destroy the Union, "conspirators of failure to carry out their own ambitious ends, and the slave holders' rebellion" is held up to eternal execration as a wicked attempt to destroy the nation.

No man ever loved the Union of the fathers more devotedly than Jefferson Davis, and no man ever strove more earnestly than he to prevent its dissolution, but when all hope had fled, he followed his sovereign State in the exercise of her constitutional right of secession, and was called to the Presidency of the Confederacy.

He did everything in his power to avert war. Stood purely on the defensive, and made as purely a defensive fight for sacred principles and rights as the world ever saw, or the pen of the historian ever recorded. Mr. Davis was active and earnest in his efforts to affect a compromise and reach a basis which would permit the Southern States to remain in the

Union. He was a member of a committee of the Senate to whom was referred the famous Crittendon Compromise and avowed himself willing to accept that or any other plan that the opposing factions could agree upon, and promised any reasonable hope of success. But the "Republican" members of the committee rejected absolutely everything that the Northern and Southern Democrats and Whigs agreed on, and seemed determined not to consent to anything that promised a settlement.

Mr. Davis did not take an active part in planning or hastening secession, and I think he only regretfully consented to it, as a political necessity for the preservation of popular and State rights, which were seriously threatened by the triumph of a sectional party who were pledged to make war on them.

The reports of the United States Senate prior to the 5th of January, 1861, show Southern Senators united in an effort to effect pacifications and tell what they would do, if anything to restore harmony and prevent disunion. They did not even deign a response. Thus by their sullen silence they made confession of their stubborn purpose to hold up no hand raised to maintain the Union.

But events hastened, his sovereign State seceded from the Union, and Mr. Davis did not hesitate to obey her mandate and follow her lead. While actively engaged in organizing the forces of his State and preparing for whatever emergency might come the delegates of the "Provisional Congress" assembled at Montgomery, Ala., and among their first acts unanimously elected as President of the Confederate States Jefferson Davis of Mississippi.

As soon as Virginia passed her ordinance of secession and cast in her lot with her Southern sisters, Mr. Davis proposed the removal of the Confederate Capital to Richmond, and this was promptly agreed upon. His headquarters were first at the Spotswood hotel and then in the White House of the Confederacy which the city of Richmond purchased as a gift to the President, but which he persistently declined to receive, and only consented to occupy on conditions that full rent should be paid for it.

Our space does not permit us to tell the story of the Confederate disasters, nor can we detail the story of Lee's splendid victories, nor can we tell of Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Chickamauga, The Wilderness, Spottsylvania Court House, Cold Harbor, Dalton, Atlanta, Petersburg and hundreds of other hard fought fields which illustrated American heroism, but in which General Grant's famous policy of "Attrition" was finally successful, and the Confederates were starved into the final result of Appomattox and Greensboro. Nor can we tell in full how grandly our noble chief bore himself amid all of these changing fortunes. We can only give a few illustrations of his life and character during these eventful years, and finally of his capture by the Fourth Michigan Cavalry on May 10th, 1865, at Irwinville, Ga.

Few events have ever been more misrepresented than this capture, when it has been claimed by Northern writers that when captured he was attired in woman's clothes. Is truth he was over his shoulders a cape some thing like a Haverlock, and did not try to conceal his other clothing.

It will be impossible for us at this time to give a detailed account of his imprisonment, but we will refer you to *Jefferson Davis: which gives an accurate account of the country and brutal treatment he was subjected to. There were demands all the while to hang him, on which Thompson to charge and he was even accused of complicity in the assassination of Mr. Lincoln, but nothing of this nature could be proven on him and he was finally released on bail.*

Although really a Northern sympathizer has thought on our Confederate people have not looked upon Mr. Davis as the unsuccessful leader of a wrong cause, but as one who bravely, heroically and patiently stood for country, God and truth as he was given to see it, and died a noble martyr for his people. But Jefferson Davis clings to a place in the hearts of his people done out by any means rest on his services to the Confederacy.

As a young soldier on the frontier and in Indian wars, he has illustrated the highest type of the young officer

which the United States Military Academy at West Point sent out in its primeval days; as Colonel of the gallant Mississippi Regiment, he had won imperishable glory on the fields of Mexico, and contributed no insignificant part towards planting the "Stars and Stripes" on the walls of Montezuma; as representative of his State in the halls of Congress he had been the peer of the greatest in the House or the Senate, even though there were giants in those days. As Secretary of War he had proven himself the ablest the country has ever had, and had introduced reforms which are even now blessing the department and the service, which have refused to honor him dead.

As a popular orator and able debator he had few equals and scarcely any superior, even in this land of orators, and as a chivalric, stainless, Christian gentleman, and an incomparable patriot, he won the respect and esteem of all who knew him, and has left behind a record of which his people are justly proud.

Besides all this he suffered in the room of his people, went to prison for them, had indignity put upon him, was hated, slandered, maltreated and ostracised in the land he had served so faithfully, all for them.

No wonder then that the people in our Southland loved Jefferson Davis, that they felt the deepest interest in all that concerned him, as he spent the evening of his last days in his home beside the Gulf, that they watched with breathless interest the news of his sickness, that there was mourning in palace and cottage alike, when the wires flashed the tidings of his death, and that immense crowds attended his funeral, that memorial services were held and eloquent eulogies pronounced in every city, town and village in the South, and that now the people are profoundly interested in everything concerning his life, character and death.

In a speech delivered in Atlanta during the visit of Mr. Davis at the unveiling of the monument of his friend, B. H. Hill, in May, 1886, the gifted and lamented Henry W. Grady in his own matchless eloquence, spoke of Jefferson Davis, as the uncrowned king of his people.

Thank God he is no longer uncrowned. His people have crowned him with loving hearts and redeemed by the blood of that Savior in whom he humbly trusted he has come off con-

queror, eye more than conqueror, the Captain of our Salvation, he has left him "palms of victory" and a record of rejoicing.

That crowns with peerless light, Which shall new lustre beam When victor's wreaths and arch's gems Shall blend in common dust.

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